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thrive

NOV'21-JAN'22

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THIS ISSUE

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DAVID & SOLOMON

– kingdom quest

In this issue of *THRIVE* we will visit one of the most significant parts of the biblical narrative: the story of David and Solomon. The stories of David and Solomon are filled with profound lessons and amazing spiritual precedents. This part of the Old Testament is a great and memorable read. I am confident that you will find this issue of *Thrive* both inspiring and deeply sobering.

MJ

LINEAGE OF GRACE

1 Chronicles 1-9

God's purpose, which he is now working out, did not just begin with Jesus and the apostles, nor with Moses, nor even with Abraham. This is the implied message in this genealogy which stretches back to Adam. The writer of Chronicles, writing sometime after the return from exile in Babylon, is reminding the Jews that their previous rebellion does not nullify God's faithfulness to his purpose. God was giving them the chance, after 70 years in exile, to start over afresh. That's the context in which the story of David and the kings of Judah is told in Chronicles. Luke also, in introducing the ministry of Jesus the Messiah, begins with a genealogy stretching back to Adam. Both Luke and the Chronicler are saying that God's purpose has remained consistent since the beginning of creation. This consistent purpose is represented by an unbroken lineage of grace, a divine family stretching back to Adam and Eve which now includes everyone who is connected to Jesus Christ. The message of this unbroken lineage is that God's purpose has not been thwarted since the beginning. Yes, people, beginning with Adam and Eve, have rebelled against God's purpose, but that has not thwarted God at all. As Paul says, "In all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28). So, if we fall away from God, we can always be restored, and, if we do this, we will find God's purpose unbroken. We always have the opportunity to make our imperfect lives a part of God's perfect purpose.

Look over the genealogy that stretches from 1 Chronicles 1-9

Recommit yourself to God's purpose and pray for opportunities to serve him today.

The pattern established throughout the book of Judges for the leaders of Israel was as follows. The Spirit of God would come upon them in power and then they would go out and win some great victory. This had happened to Saul also. We are told that “the Spirit of God came powerfully upon him” and he then led Israel to defeat the Ammonites (1 Samuel 11). We now see that David’s anointing was greater than those who came before him because the Spirit of God did not just come upon him temporarily. The Spirit remained upon him all his life, as would be the case for all God’s people when the New Covenant would be inaugurated after Jesus’ resurrection. This pattern of power and victory, however, remains the same for David and it would be the same for Jesus, who after his anointing at the hands of John the Baptist, would go and win his own decisive battle (see Matthew 4:1-11). God always wants his anointing upon us to be proven in battle. Not the kind of battle that David fought but the kind that Jesus fought. You will find that whenever you have a moment of personal spiritual revival this will be followed by an opportunity to prove what you have been given. As you are filled to greater measure with God’s Spirit so you will be tested in greater personal battles. At one time David was called to fight wild animals to protect his father’s sheep but now he would face an armed giant. Those who fight God’s battles win. If you fight the tempter you will win. As James says, “Resist the devil and he will flee from you”. The question is not, ‘Will I win?’ but, ‘Am I willing to fight?’

Read 1 Samuel 17

What battle is God calling you to fight today?

1 Samuel 17

David's victory over Goliath proved that he was indeed the man to be Israel's king. Here was a man who could finish what Joshua began, and that, in this context, is the key. Joshua's leadership was proven by the fact that he had the faith to face the giants in the land in order to possess what God wanted to give to his people. Throughout his life, therefore, Joshua was victorious. He won because he was willing to fight in obedience to God. Saul would not do this, which is why he was rejected as king (1 Samuel 15). The story of David and Goliath is not just about a boy winning a victory over a giant. It is the reactivation of the conquest. At last the giants in the land are falling again because another Joshua had come. David was picking up where Joshua left off and completing the task. The name Joshua means 'Yahweh Saves'. This was also Jesus' real name ('Jesus' is the Greek rendering of 'Joshua'). Jesus, like Joshua, began a conquest: the establishment of God's Kingdom on earth. It is not a conquest in which we fight against people, but one in which we fight for people. It is a battle against "the spiritual forces of evil" (Ephesians 6:12). Jesus' death and resurrection was a kind of D-day in which the power of the enemy was decisively broken. It is now up to us to bring to completion what Jesus began. We are on a mission against the giants that overshadow this world and keep it in darkness. Are you willing to fight?

Read 1 Samuel 17 again

Focus on how David chose to fight
and devote yourself to the same pattern.

As you read through the first book of Samuel always keep in mind the contrast that the author is making between David and Saul. In chapter 18 we see Saul's fierce jealousy of David, while David does not even consider himself worthy to become the king's son-in-law. He does not share Saul's ambition. The reason why Saul is jealous is because David is having great successes in battle, far more than Saul is having. But the reason why David is successful now is because he had previously been faithful with smaller responsibilities. In these small things he had shown himself to be a man of obedience to, and faith in, God. Saul, on the other hand, had failed to show the same integrity in smaller things, as in the case of the Amalekites (1 Samuel 15). David did great things for God because he did small things for God (1 Samuel 17:34-36). Often, we can set our sights on doing great things for God while overlooking the small things like being helpful and considerate at home and being willing to make small sacrifices. Small acts of faithfulness lead to a life in which faith is triumphant. Small acts of sacrificial love and small steps of faith create a momentum of godly life as each stroke of an oar moves a boat. Think small. Saul's ego was too big to allow him to think small. Are you willing to do small things for God?

Read 1 Samuel 18

Think about some small sacrifices or steps of faith that you can make today.

1 Samuel 19

We read in this chapter that Saul is again tormented by an evil spirit and yet again he tries to kill David. We should also remember that this evil spirit is said previously to have been “from the Lord” (16:14). The evil spirit is being used by God in some sense to amplify Saul’s obsessive jealousy of David. Saul’s jealousy is not caused by the demon but merely creates a foothold for demonic influence. The evil spirit simply compounds what is already there. Why is God doing this? We often find examples in Scripture of God amplifying evil to make it more apparent. It is like bringing an infection to the surface so it can be recognised and dealt with. Jesus did this constantly. He sought to make the rebellion in people’s hearts more apparent. Alongside this, however, he also drew faith and devotion from the most unlikely people. This brings about a kind of polarisation where the difference between the faithful and the unfaithful becomes manifest. That is what we see here in the case of Saul and David: an increasingly polarised picture. As God brings out the *worst* in Saul, he, at the same time, brings out the *best* in David. If there is some kind of bad attitude in you, God will often create circumstances that serve to amplify this. This is not to ruin you but to save you. If you recognise what God is showing you and seek his help and healing, then God can begin to bring out his best in you.

Read 1 Samuel 19

Ask God to bring out the worst in you and the best in you.

God is My Help – Psalm 54

Psalms like this one, in which the psalmists are facing some dire threat, have a wonderful feature in common, and one that we can learn from as we face various challenges. In each case, the psalmists remind themselves of who God is to them. In Psalm 54, in the context of being pursued by Saul, David says: “Surely God is my help; the Lord is the one who sustains me.” For all that was bad about his situation, it nevertheless gave him a clear opportunity to experience the reality of what he was declaring about God. God will often allow us to face hardships so that, whatever else might be the case, we get to feel our need of him. We need God all the time, it’s just that we don’t always feel that need. It is often when we are stretched to the limit of our capacities and when we face overwhelming threats that we are reminded that we cannot control our own destiny. However bad your situation might be, it might well also be an important prompter to reconnect with God. This doesn’t make the situation good, but it does mean that good can come from it. Because of our proneness to fall back into independence and autonomy, regular reminders of our dependence on God can be valuable. Your life belongs in God’s hands. Let every circumstance remind you to keep it there.

Read **Psalm 54**. Ask God to reveal himself to you in the midst of your circumstances.